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ABSTRACT

In order to evaluate the Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges program at the University of South Carolina, a brief opinionnaire was developed to sample student opinions concerning the program. During early March 1974, the opinionnaire was sent along with a self-addressed, campus-return envelope to the leaders of all 161 student organizations. Three weeks were allotted for the opinionnaire to be returned. Of the total sample, 62 opinionnaires were returned before the cut-off date. Results indicated: (1) From a selected sample of U.S.C. student leaders, 72.6% of the students believed selection to Who's Who to be of "great" or "some" importance. (2) Student opinion also revealed that leadership recognition and future employment interests were the two reasons most frequently expressed for Who's Who importance. (3) In view of the critical comments regarding the program's operation at U.S.C., it is recommended that the selection process be carefully reviewed. (Author/MJM)

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Division of Student Affairs

SUBJECT: The Who's Who Program at the University
of South Carolina - A Study of Student
Opinion

Research Notes No. 20-74

May 28, 1974

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SUBJECT: The Who's Who Program at the University of South Carolina - A Study of Student Opinion

Background and Purpose:

The program Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges originated in 1934. The basic concept of the Who's Who program is to provide a democratic, national basis for the recognition of outstanding campus leaders. An annual quota of 36 students is assigned to the University of South Carolina. Selection is made by a student-staff committee and is based on several criteria including scholarship, leadership, participation in extracurricular and academic activities, citizenship, services to the school, and the student's promise of future usefulness to society. The University is currently evaluating its involvement in the Who's Who program.

In order to sample student opinion concerning this program, the Research Office of the Division of Student Affairs at the University of South Carolina has developed a brief opinionnaire. Opinionnaire items were selected to provide representative student opinion concerning the perceived importance of the Who's Who program.

Method

During early March, 1974, the opinionnaire (see Appendix A) was sent along with a self-addressed, "campus" return envelope to the leaders of all 161 student organizations (presidents of student government, fraternities and sororities, residence halls, and various clubs). Three weeks were allotted for the opinionnaire to be returned to the Research Office. Of the total sample, 62 (39.74%) opinionnaires were returned before the cut-off date¹.

Results

Question 1 of the Opinionnaire asked, "Prior to this correspondence, have you been aware that U.S.C. participates in the Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges program?" The response to Question 1 is shown in Table 1.

¹ The 39.74% figure represents the percentage of the total opinionnaires sent out minus the total returned unopened divided by the total number of completed (useable) forms received.

Table 1

Prior Knowledge of Who's Who Program

	Absolute Frequency	Adjusted Frequency (Percent)
Yes	58	93.5
No	4	6.5
Total	62	100.0

Question 2 asked, "Are you currently, or have you been, a Who's Who recipient?" (High school Who's Who recipients were not included.) The response to this question is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Prior Who's Who Recipient?

	Absolute Frequency	Adjusted Frequency (Percent)
Yes	12	19.4
No	50	80.6
Total	62	100.0

Question 3 of the Opinionnaire asked, "Is it important to you to be selected to Who's Who (state relative importance)?" The results are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3

Relative Importance of Selection to Who's Who

	Absolute Frequency	Adjusted Frequency (Percent)
Great Importance	20	32.3
Some Importance	25	40.3
Little Importance	10	16.1
No Importance	7	11.3
Total	62	100.0

Comments:

1. Forty-five students (72.6%) believed selection to Who's Who to be of "great" or "some" importance.
2. Seventeen students (27.4%) felt selection to Who's Who to be of "little" or "no" importance.

A content analysis of reasons for the importance of being selected to Who's Who revealed two major factors. The first factor was the demonstration of character -- the students have been acknowledged as leaders by peers and other associates in recognition for work contributed to the University. A second factor was the significance a Who's Who honor would have on future employment interests, reference purposes, and the job market. It is interesting to note that a strong minority opinion was expressed by some students to the effect that the Who's Who program is a farce, a personality contest, and has a poorly executed system of student selection.

Question 4 asked, "What importance do you think future employers place on Who's Who awards?" The results of Question 4 are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Relative Importance Future Employers Place on Who's Who Selection

	Absolute Frequency	Adjusted Frequency (Percent)
Great Importance	14	22.6
Some Importance	31	50.0
Little Importance	10	16.1
No Importance	7	11.3
Total	62	100.0

Comments:

1. Forty-five students (72.6%) believed future employers place "great" or "some" importance on Who's Who selection.

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Question 5 asked for any additional comments the student wished to make concerning the Who's Who program. A content analysis of the student's responses indicated some conflicting opinion about future continuation of Who's Who honors at U.S.C. Of the 30 (48.4%) students responding to this question approximately 40% believed the process should be maintained, i.e. U.S.C. should continue the plan and ideals of the Who's Who program. The other 60% divided criticism among the program into various concerns. Some felt that employers didn't care about Who's Who honors, others felt it was an unnecessary ego inflation, and still others felt less selection emphasis should be placed on academics. Some students reported that the Who's Who selection committee was corrupt, and the criteria for selection were not standard.

Summary:

1. From a selected sample of U.S.C student leaders, 72.6% of the students believed selection to Who's Who honors to be of "great" or "some" importance.
2. Student opinion also revealed that leadership recognition and future employment interests were the two reasons most frequently expressed for Who's Who importance.
3. In view of the critical comments regarding the program's operation at U.S.C., it is recommended that the selection process be carefully reviewed.